

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSM-03 TRSE-00 OMB-01  
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00  
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INRE-00 ACDA-12 NEAE-00 /074 W  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 277  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 11302

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: IS, EG, XF  
SUBJECT: ISRAELI MOOD AFTER THE KNESSET DEBATE

1. SUMMARY: AFTER THE EXCITEMENT OF BEGIN'S TRIP TO ISMAILIA AND THE KNESSET DEBATE, THERE IS NOW A FEELING OF TAKING STOCK AND REFLECTING ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. THIS PERIOD OF RELATICE CALM HAS ALSO BEEN OCCASIONED BY THE FACT THAT THE DETAILS OF BEGIN'S PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK ARE NOW KNOWN AND ISRAELIS CAN REFLECT MORE CAREFULLY ON ITS IMPLICATIONS. BEGIN STILL HAS THE PUBLIC WITH HIM BUT THERE IS SOME CRITICISM WHICH ASKS WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER HAS MOVED TOO FAST. END SUMMARY.

2. AS THE WEEKEND APPROACHES, ISRAELIS ARE ANTICIPATING  
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A QUIET PERIOD, FOR A CHANGE. AFTER THE EXCITEMENT OF BEGIN'S MEETING WITH SADAT IN ISMAILIA AND THE MARATHON KNESSET DEBATE ON WEDNESDAY (DEC 28), THERE IS AN ALMOST PALPABLE FEELING IN THE COUNTRY AS PEOPLE ASK "WAIT A MINUTE, WHERE ARE WE?" THIS STOCK TAKING AND LETTING THE DUST SETTLE AFTER THE EVENTS OF RECENT

WEEKS EXTENDS BOTH TO INDIVIDUALS AND TO PARTIES. THE NRP EXECUTIVE MET LAST NIGHT AND EXPRESSED ITS CONCERN ABOUT THE FUTURE OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE TERRITORIES. THE DMC COUNCIL ALSO MET LAST NIGHT AND HEARD YADIN EXPLAIN WHY HE FELT HIS PARTY SHOULD GIVE ITS CONTINUING SUPPORT -- "WE MUST GIVE BEGIN A FAIR CHANCE." EVEN THE GUSH EMUNIM HAS PAUSED AND HAS DECIDED THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO DEMONSTRATE AGAINST BEGIN'S PLAN BUT WILL NO LONGER ATTACK HIM PERSONALLY.

3. THIS MOMENT OF REFLECTION HAS ALSO COME ABOUT BECAUSE THE DETAILS OF BEGIN'S PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE TERRITORIES ARE NOW KNOWN. ISRAELIS CAN DISCUSS THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PLAN IN FULL KNOWLEDGE OF ITS DETAILS AND MUST NO LONGER RELY ON SPECULATIVE REPORTS. BUT THERE REMAINS A DEGREE OF UNCERTAINTY; FOR EXAMPLE, MAARIV HEADLINES TODAY THAT BEGIN IS ABOUT TO EMBARK ON ANOTHER TRIP ABROAD TO A SECRET DESTINATION. THIS TYPE OF REPORTING CONTINUES TO KEEP PEOPLE ON EDGE. NONETHELESS, THE CORE CRITICISM WE ARE HEARING IS RESTRICTED TO ASKING WHETHER BEGIN HAS MOVED TOO FAST AND TO QUESTIONING AND DEBATING HIS FUTURE TACTICS. WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK OF DISCUSSION/DISSENSION, THE PRIME MINISTER CONTINUES TO HOLD THE SUPPORT OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

4. ISRAELIS SEE CONTRADICTORY IMPLICATIONS AS THEY  
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CONSIDER THE QUESTION OF TIMING OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. THERE IS A FEELING (PROBABLY GROWING) THAT THE LONGER THE NEGOTIATIONS GO ON, THE MORE DIFFICULT IT WILL BE FOR ISRAEL TO MAKE CONCESSIONS. THIS FEELING ADDS TO THE GENERAL CONVICTION THAT TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE AND THE OPPORTUNITY FACING ISRAEL AND EGYPT MUST NOT BE LOST. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS THE VIEW THAT THE MORE THE ISRAELI PUBLIC DEBATES THE DETAILS OF BEGIN'S PLAN, THE MORE CHANGE THERE IS OF EFFECTING CHANGES IN THAT PLAN. THOSE WHO HOLD THIS VIEW POINT OUT THAT WE CAN EXPECT A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS IN THE TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE CONVENING OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE IN JERUSALEM AS ISRAELIS STUDY AND CONTEMPLATE THE COMING NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT.

5. AS WE HAVE EARLIER REPORTED, THE FUTURE OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES CONTINUES TO BE THE CRUX OF THE MATTER WITH ATTENTION FOCUSED ON HOW BEST TO AVOID THE POSSIBILITY OF AN AUTONOMOUS TERRITORY EVOLVING INTO AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE IF IT WERE CAREFULLY CONTROLLED UNDER PRECISELY DEFINED SECURITY GUARANTEES.

IT IS ARGUED THAT THIS MINOTIRY COULD BECOME MORE VOCAL AND ARTICULATE IN THE WEEKS AHEAD. WE MENTION THIS ONLY TO POINT OUT THAT ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION IS NOT MONOLITHIC AND TO SHOW THAT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION CONTINUES TO BE GIVEN TO A WIDE RANGE OF FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE TERRITORIES.

6. THERE IS ONE FINAL POINT WHICH WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED AND WHICH WE BELIEVE MERITS REPORTING; THOUGHTFUL ISRAELIS HAVE POINTED OUT THAT ONE OF THE REASONS FOR BEGIN'S SPECTACULAR SUCCESS AND RISING PUBLIC POPULARITY IN RECENT WEEKS IS THE ISRAELI PUBLIC'S VIEW THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS EXERTING NO PRESSURE ON HIM OR THE GOI. THIS ABSENCE OF ANY U.S. ARM TWISTING (AT LEAST ANY THAT IS OBVIOUS) HAS ENABLED BEGIN TO PROJECT THE APPEARANCE OF A COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL

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UNFETTERED "ISRAELI" FOREIGN POLICY. BEGIN IS NOT HAMPERED OR RESTRICTED BY HIS CONSULTATIONS WITH THE U.S., THESE OBSERVERS ARGUE; ON THE CONTRARY, HIS CLOSE TIES WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY ENABLE HIM TO INFORM THEM ABOUT HIS POLICIES AND FORESTALL FUTURE PRESSURE. THESE CONSULTATIONS ALSO GIVE AT LEAST THE APPEARANCE OF U.S. BACKING FOR HIS PROPOSALS. LEWIS

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NNN

\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* CONFIDENTIAL

## Message Attributes

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